

To: Stulman, Amanda[Stulman.Amanda@epa.gov]
From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Wed 4/8/2015 6:20:20 PM
Subject: FW: Early Morning Clips: Virgin Island Pesticides Poisoning Incident

From: Shore, Berry
Sent: Wednesday, April 08, 2015 8:35 AM
To: R2 News Clips Subscribers
Subject: Early Morning Clips: Virgin Island Pesticides Poisoning Incident

EPA Looks at Pesticide as Cause of Family Illness at Resort

WASHINGTON — Apr 7, 2015, 3:43 PM ET

By BRETT ZONGKER

ABC/Associated Press

Delaware Family Fighting for Their Lives After Pesticide Poisoning: Vacation Turned Nightmare: Family Poisoned at Caribbean Resort

Video: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/epa-pesticide-family-illness-resort-30139910>

Three members of a Delaware family remained hospitalized Tuesday as federal officials continued to investigate their exposure to a toxic chemical during a vacation at a Virgin Islands resort.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials said the agency is looking into the use of the pesticide methyl bromide, which is prohibited in residential settings, at the Sirenusa Condominium Resort in Cruz Bay, St. John. The Justice Department also is investigating the company that may be responsible.

The Esmond family of Wilmington, Delaware, was staying at the Caribbean resort when the incident was reported March 20. Paramedics responded after four people became seriously ill.

A family spokesman said Steve Esmond, his wife, Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons were taken to hospitals on the mainland United States. The sons are in critical condition. Esmond has regained consciousness, but his sons have remained in a coma weeks after the exposure, family spokesman James Maron told The News Journal of Wilmington. Devine was treated and released.

"They are confident in their medical professionals and are hopeful for a full recovery," Maron said in a written statement Tuesday. "The Esmond family thanks everyone for their support and concern for their recovery from this unthinkable tragedy of pesticide poisoning."

Esmond is head of a private middle school in Wilmington, and Devine is a dentist.

Use of the pesticide was confirmed the day after the family became ill, which has helped inform doctors and medical experts on how to treat the family, said Judith Enck, the EPA's regional administrator in New York City, which has jurisdiction over the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"We have confirmed that the problem is indeed methyl bromide," she said. "Methyl bromide is a potent neurotoxin. It's a gas. It can cause convulsions, coma, cognitive deficits, inflammation of the lungs. A lot depends on how much a person is exposed to and for what period of time."

The EPA banned the chemical for residential use in 1984 primarily for health concerns. That ban extends to U.S. territories, including the Virgin Islands, Enck said.

So far the investigation has revealed a certified applicator working for Memphis, Tennessee-based Terminix applied the methyl bromide in the complex while targeting an indoor beetle that consumes wood, Enck said. The company is now under a criminal investigation led by the U.S. Justice Department.

Terminix issued a statement to The Associated Press saying the safety of its customers and employees is a top priority.

"First and foremost, the family is in our thoughts and prayers," spokesman Michael Wassmer said. "We're cooperating with authorities in their investigation, and we're conducting our own thorough internal investigation."

Investigators also learned methyl bromide has been used in the complex before, the EPA said, but it's not clear why the ban was ignored.

"Certified pesticide applicators know this is not approved for indoor residential use," Enck said. "The health effects are quite serious."

Sea Glass Vacations, a rental agent for several units at the resort, has said it was aware the family became ill while staying in the Villa Capri unit from March 14 to March 22. In a written statement, the rental company said the unit below Villa Capri was recently treated for pests by Terminix, but the family's unit itself had not been treated.

Sea Glass said it has terminated its contract with Terminix.

Now the EPA is continuing to test and monitor the property and is continuing to investigate the details of the family's exposure, Enck said, "to make sure it never happens again anywhere."

US probes pesticide poisoning that sickened Delaware family in US Virgin Islands

by DANICA COTO

Updated: April 7, 2015 - 2:20 PM

Minneapolis Star Tribune/Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — U.S. authorities have determined that the highly toxic pesticide methyl bromide caused a Delaware family to become seriously ill at a U.S. Virgin Islands resort, and that the chemical was used at the resort several times in the past year, officials said Tuesday.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said it is contacting people including employees at Sirenusa resort in St. John to determine how many others might have been exposed to the pesticide. It was banned for indoor residential use in 1984.

"Methyl bromide is a potent neurotoxin, so it really affects your central nervous system," EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck said in a telephone interview.

The Esmond family had rented a second-floor condominium at Sirenusa, a resort of 22 villas, late last month. The family began having seizures and was airlifted to hospitals in the U.S., ABC news reported Monday, quoting a written statement by family attorney James Maron that said the two parents are recovering but their two sons are in critical condition. Maron did not return calls seeking independent confirmation.

The U.S. Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation.

Enck said the pesticide was used March 28 on the condominium's first floor, and agents are trying to determine how much was employed. She said the EPA found that methyl bromide was used at other Sirenusa units in the past year, but declined to say how many, citing the investigation.

Sea Glass Vacations LLC, which rents units at Sirenusa, said in a statement it has

terminated its contract with Terminix and the townhome under investigation is unoccupied.

"We are sending our thoughts and prayers to the family impacted by this tragic incident," the company said. "We remain committed to full cooperation with all local and federal authorities."

Terminix spokesman Pete Tosches said in a statement that the company is conducting its own investigation and is cooperating with authorities.

"We're committed to performing all work we undertake in a way that is safe for our employees, customers and the public," he said.

Enck said the EPA is awaiting results of air and wipe samples taken from the condominium.

EPA looks at use of pesticide that sickened family at resort

By Brett Zongker

April 7 at 5:03 PM

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An odorless pesticide sprayed at a Caribbean resort has left three members of a Delaware family hospitalized for weeks after they became seriously ill during their Virgin Islands vacation, and federal officials said Tuesday that investigators found the toxic chemical has been used at the resort several times before.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials said the agency is looking into the use of the pesticide methyl bromide at the Sirenusa Condominium Resort in Cruz Bay, St. John. The agency is contacting people, including resort employees, to determine how

many others might have been exposed to the pesticide, which is prohibited in residential settings. The Justice Department also is investigating the company that may be responsible.

The Esmond family of Wilmington, Delaware, was staying at the resort when they began having seizures March 20.

A family spokesman said Steve Esmond, his wife, Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons were airlifted to hospitals on the U.S. mainland. The sons are in critical condition. Esmond has regained consciousness, but his sons have remained in a coma weeks after the exposure, family spokesman James Maron told The News Journal of Wilmington. Devine was treated and released.

“They are confident in their medical professionals and are hopeful for a full recovery,” Maron said in a written statement Tuesday. “The Esmond family thanks everyone for their support and concern for their recovery from this unthinkable tragedy of pesticide poisoning.”

Esmond is head of a private middle school in Wilmington, and Devine is a dentist.

Use of the pesticide was confirmed the day after the family became ill, which has helped inform doctors on how to treat the family, said Judith Enck, the EPA’s regional administrator in New York City, which has jurisdiction over the U.S. Virgin Islands.

“We have confirmed that the problem is indeed methyl bromide,” she said. “Methyl bromide is a potent neurotoxin. It’s a gas. It can cause convulsions, coma, cognitive deficits, inflammation of the lungs. A lot depends on how much a person is exposed to and for what period of time.”

The EPA banned the chemical for residential use in 1984 primarily for health concerns. That ban extends to U.S. territories, including the Virgin Islands, Enck said.

So far the investigation has revealed a certified applicator working for Memphis, Tennessee-based Terminix applied the methyl bromide in the complex while targeting an indoor beetle that consumes wood, Enck said. The company is now under a criminal investigation led by the U.S. Justice Department.

Terminix issued a statement saying the safety of its customers and employees is a top priority.

“First and foremost, the family is in our thoughts and prayers,” spokesman Michael Wassmer said. “We’re cooperating with authorities in their investigation, and we’re conducting our own thorough internal investigation.”

Investigators also learned methyl bromide has been used in the complex before, the EPA said, but it’s not clear why the ban was ignored.

“Certified pesticide applicators know this is not approved for indoor residential use,” Enck said. “The health effects are quite serious.”

Sea Glass Vacations LLC, which rents units at Sirenusa, said in a statement that it has terminated its contract with Terminix and the home under investigation is unoccupied. The rental company earlier said the unit below the Esmond family’s dwelling was treated for pests by Terminix.

“We are sending our thoughts and prayers to the family impacted by this tragic incident,” the company said. “We remain committed to full cooperation with all local and federal authorities.”

The EPA is continuing to test and monitor the property and is continuing to investigate the details of the family’s exposure, Enck said, “to make sure it never happens again anywhere.”

Associated Press writer Danica Coto in San Juan, Puerto Rico, contributed to this report.

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Some in Del. family in 'rough shape' from pesticide

By Sandy Bauers,

Posted: Wednesday, April 8, 2015, 1:08 AM

The Philadelphia Inquirer

More than two weeks after a Wilmington family was sickened after being exposed to a toxic and banned pesticide at a vacation condo in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the father and two teenage sons remain hospitalized.

Stephen Esmond, an administrator at the Tatnall School in Wilmington, is conscious but unable to move, and his sons are still in comas, his lawyer has told CNN. In a subsequent news release, the lawyer said Esmond was "improving and stable" and the boys remained in critical condition.

Esmond's wife and the boys' mother, Theresa Devine, a dentist, has been discharged "and is doing well," he said.

"The boys are in rough shape," family spokesman James J. Maron told CNN, adding that "the family are all fighters. They're fighting for everything right now. I understand it's a long recovery."

Beware toxic pesticides used at vacation spots

Maron said that the family is "confident in their medical professionals and are hopeful for a full recovery."

Maron is a lawyer with the Wilmington firm Maron Marvel Bradley & Anderson L.L.C. One of its practice areas includes representing clients alleging harm by chemical exposure.

Maron called the incident an "unthinkable tragedy," noting that "many questions remain why an odorless pesticide of this level of toxicity could be manufactured, distributed, and applied in a residential area, resulting in this family's injuries."

Federal officials have launched a criminal investigation into the incident, in which a condominium unit directly below the one the Esmond family was staying in on the island of St. John was sprayed with methyl bromide, a highly toxic pesticide that can cause convulsions, coma, and cognitive deficits.

It was banned for use indoors in residential settings in 1984, but some agricultural uses are permitted. Advocates for a ban on the chemical have criticized such exceptions. Jennifer Sass, senior scientist and toxicology expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, a national nonprofit advocacy group, said that by continuing to allow even restricted uses in the United States, "you're also allowing people to buy it, sell it, and possess it."

The spraying was March 18, officials have said. Paramedics were summoned to the condo on March 20. So, for portions of two days, the family was breathing the odorless, colorless gas - a neurotoxin - without knowing it.

The family later was airlifted to hospitals in the Philadelphia area.

The Justice Department began its investigation March 25, according to a notice filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission by ServiceMaster Global Holdings Inc., the parent company of Terminix, which sprayed the chemical.

The notice referred to the family's "serious injuries" and said the extent of potential fines, claims, or other actions, plus "reputational harm," was unknown.

A U.S. Environmental Protection Agency investigation also is continuing. On Tuesday, Judith A. Enck, the administrator for the regional office that includes the Virgin Islands, a U.S. territory, said that officials had confirmed that methyl bromide was the pesticide used and that it was the "likely cause" of the family's illness.

According to Maron, Esmond was unconscious and the other three family members were having seizures when paramedics arrived.

Enck said that her agency "is taking this case very seriously." EPA officials learned of the incident the same day and staff were on the scene within 24 hours, she said. Air samples and "wipe tests" confirmed the presence of the chemical.

"We're approaching this in two ways," Enck said. "EPA is doing a comprehensive investigation surrounding this particular incident. Second, EPA is looking at how we can ensure this never, ever happens again to anyone. So, we're looking at whether training is sufficient. We're looking at how something that was banned for indoor residential use in 1984 . . . how such a long period of time can go by and we still have a situation where a certified applicator uses this."

Enck also said that investigators from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, a public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, arrived Monday to assist in the investigation.

The day the Esmonds became ill, Enck was in the Virgin Islands to deliver a climate change speech, and she had planned to go to St. John on other business. So on

Sunday, two days after the family fell ill, she met with EPA staff members there. On Monday, she visited the condo. She also briefed the governor of the Virgin Islands and met with its top environmental commissioner.

"This is a really important situation," she said. "We will hold the responsible parties fully accountable."

Charles A. Tierney 3d, head of the Tatnall School, issued a statement Monday: "All of us at the Tatnall School appreciate that so many people have expressed heartfelt support for our head of middle school Steve Esmond and his family. We share your love and concern for Steve, his wife, and their sons, who both attend our school. On campus, students have created cards, a banner, and works of art for the family. Students participating in the middle school's annual talent show also dedicated their performance to the Esmond family."

Terminix officials have not commented other than to release a statement: "First and foremost, the family is in our thoughts and prayers. We're cooperating with authorities in their investigation, and we're conducting our own thorough internal investigation. We're committed to performing all work we undertake in a way that is safe for our employees, customers, and the public."

EPA Looks At Use Of Pesticide That Sickened Family At Resort

April 7, 2015

ABC - Baltimore

WASHINGTON (AP) — An odorless pesticide sprayed at a Caribbean resort has left three members of a Delaware family hospitalized for weeks after they became seriously ill during their Virgin Islands vacation, and federal officials said Tuesday that investigators found the toxic chemical has been used at the resort several times before.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials said the agency is looking into the use of the pesticide methyl bromide at the Sirenusa Condominium Resort in Cruz Bay, St.

John. The agency is contacting people, including resort employees, to determine how many others might have been exposed to the pesticide, which is prohibited in residential settings. The Justice Department also is investigating the company that may be responsible.

The Esmond family of Wilmington, Delaware, was staying at the resort when they began having seizures March 20.

A family spokesman said Steve Esmond, his wife, Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons were airlifted to hospitals on the U.S. mainland. The sons are in critical condition. Esmond has regained consciousness, but his sons have remained in a coma weeks after the exposure, family spokesman James Maron told The News Journal of Wilmington. Devine was treated and released.

“They are confident in their medical professionals and are hopeful for a full recovery,” Maron said in a written statement Tuesday. “The Esmond family thanks everyone for their support and concern for their recovery from this unthinkable tragedy of pesticide poisoning.”

Esmond is head of a private middle school in Wilmington, and Devine is a dentist.

Use of the pesticide was confirmed the day after the family became ill, which has helped inform doctors on how to treat the family, said Judith Enck, the EPA’s regional administrator in New York City, which has jurisdiction over the U.S. Virgin Islands.

“We have confirmed that the problem is indeed methyl bromide,” she said. “Methyl bromide is a potent neurotoxin. It’s a gas. It can cause convulsions, coma, cognitive deficits, inflammation of the lungs. A lot depends on how much a person is exposed to and for what period of time.”

The EPA banned the chemical for residential use in 1984 primarily for health concerns. That ban extends to U.S. territories, including the Virgin Islands, Enck said.

So far the investigation has revealed a certified applicator working for Memphis, Tennessee-based Terminix applied the methyl bromide in the complex while targeting an indoor beetle that consumes wood, Enck said. The company is now under a criminal investigation led by the U.S. Justice Department.

Terminix issued a statement saying the safety of its customers and employees is a top priority.

“First and foremost, the family is in our thoughts and prayers,” spokesman Michael Wassmer said. “We’re cooperating with authorities in their investigation, and we’re conducting our own thorough internal investigation.”

Investigators also learned methyl bromide has been used in the complex before, the EPA said, but it’s not clear why the ban was ignored.

“Certified pesticide applicators know this is not approved for indoor residential use,” Enck said. “The health effects are quite serious.”

Sea Glass Vacations LLC, which rents units at Sirenusa, said in a statement that it has terminated its contract with Terminix and the home under investigation is unoccupied. The rental company earlier said the unit below the Esmond family’s dwelling was treated for pests by Terminix.

“We are sending our thoughts and prayers to the family impacted by this tragic incident,” the company said. “We remain committed to full cooperation with all local and federal authorities.”

The EPA is continuing to test and monitor the property and is continuing to investigate the details of the family’s exposure, Enck said, “to make sure it never happens again anywhere.”

Associated Press writer Danica Coto in San Juan, Puerto Rico, contributed to this report.

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Family of four WERE poisoned by illegal pesticide on Caribbean vacation leaving two sons in critical condition as US authorities confirm criminal investigation opened

By Anneta Konstantinides

Published: 15:24 EST, 7 April 2015 | Updated: 18:12 EST, 7 April 2015

London Dailymail.com (United Kingdom)

- Steve Esmond, his wife Theresa Divine and their two teenage sons fell seriously ill while staying at the Sirenusa Resort in St. John
- Divine was released from hospital and is now in occupational therapy
- The family's lawyer said the boys are in 'rough shape'
- On Friday the US Environmental Protection Agency said preliminary tests showed there was 'a presence of methyl bromide in the unit

US authorities have confirmed that the highly toxic pesticide methyl bromide caused a Delaware family to become seriously ill at a U.S. Virgin Islands resort, and that the chemical was used at the resort several times in the past year, officials said Tuesday.

The US Environmental Protection Agency said it is contacting people including employees at Sirenusa resort in St. John to determine how many others might have been exposed to the pesticide. It was banned for indoor residential use in 1984.

'Methyl bromide is a potent neurotoxin, so it really affects your central nervous system,' EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck said in a telephone interview.

Steve Esmond and his wife, Dr Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons fell seriously ill during their stay at the Sirenusa Condominium Resort on the island of St. John

The Esmond family had rented a second-floor condominium at Sirenusa, a resort of 22 villas, late last month.

Steve Esmond and his wife, Dr Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons fell seriously ill during their stay on the island of St. John.

The family were airlifted to separate hospitals in Philadelphia suffering major respiratory trauma. Sean, 16, and Ryan, 14, were in critical condition.

The family attorney James Maron confirmed the two parents are recovering but their two sons are in critical condition.

James Maron, the family's lawyer, said the boys were in 'rough shape'.

'The family are all fighters,' he told WPBF News. 'They're fighting for everything right now. I understand it's a long recovery.'

The US Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation.

Photo: Sean, 16, (pictured) and his 14-year-old brother Ryan remain in comas two weeks after being hospitalized

James Maron, the family's lawyer, said the boys were in 'rough shape'

Enck said the pesticide was used March 28 on the condominium's first floor, and agents are trying to determine how much was employed.

She said the EPA found that methyl bromide was used at other Sirenusa units in the past year, but declined to say how many, citing the investigation.

Sea Glass Vacations LLC, which rents units at Sirenusa, said in a statement it has terminated its contract with Terminix and the townhome under investigation is unoccupied.

'We are sending our thoughts and prayers to the family impacted by this tragic incident,' the company said. 'We remain committed to full cooperation with all local and federal authorities.'

Terminix spokesman Pete Tosches said in a statement that the company is conducting its own investigation and is cooperating with authorities.

'We're committed to performing all work we undertake in a way that is safe for our employees, customers and the public,' he said.

The family was staying at the \$875-a-night Sirenusa Condominium Resort on St. John in the US Virgin Islands

Enck said the EPA is awaiting results of air and wipe samples taken from the condominium.

Maron said Esmond, who is an administrator of the private Tatnall School in Wilmington, is conscious but unable to move.

Devine, a dentist, was treated and released from the hospital and is currently in occupational therapy.

The Tatnall school, where Sean was a star lacrosse player, posted on their Facebook page that they had the Middle School students write get well cards for Esmond and his family.

'The entire Tatnall community continues to direct its supportive energy toward the Esmonds and asks that everyone keep the family in their thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.'

On Friday the US Environmental Protection agency said preliminary tests showed there was 'a presence of methyl bromide in the unit where the family was staying'

Tuition at the Tatnall school can range from \$20,000 to \$25,000 a year.

Methyl Bromide, which is odorless, can be fatal or cause serious damage to the central nervous system and respiratory system, according to the EPA.

It is acutely toxic, and only permitted to be used outdoors by certified professionals in the US.

Sea Glass Vacations, which acts as a rental agent for several units at Sirenusa Condominium Resort, said the unit where the family was staying was not treated with a pesticide, but rather the unit immediately below their suite.

Maron said when paramedics arrived at the villa Esmond was found unconscious..

Three More Companies Found with Methyl Bromide, Planning Says

By Lynda Lohr

April 7, 2015

St. Croix Source

Two extermination companies on St. Croix and one more on St. Thomas have stocks of pesticide containing methyl bromide, the Planning and Natural Resources Department indicated in a press release issued Tuesday evening.

Planning will determine from the companies' records whether they have used the banned substance and, if so, when and where.

Planning has already identified Terminix as the St. Thomas-based company that fumigated a unit at Sirenusa condominium complex on St. John using Meth-O-Gas. It said Tuesday that the company fumigated the kitchen of a lower Sirenusa unit on March 18. Two days later, four members of a Delaware family suffered apparent chemical poisoning after staying in another Sirenusa unit.

After treatment at Roy L. Schneider Hospital on St. Thomas, they were airlifted to mainland hospitals.

"This unfortunate incident poses a threat to the residents and visitors to the territory. It will not be treated lightly and the department will take appropriate enforcement action," acting Planning Commissioner Dawn L. Henry said.

She said Terminix will be held fully accountable for its actions in exposing the

community to substances that it knows or should have known were banned from use in the territory.

“Our prayers and thoughts are with the Esmond family and we pray for their full recovery,” Henry said, referring to the Delaware family sickened at Sirenusa.

Reached late Tuesday, Planning spokesman Jamal Nielsen said he had no information on the two St. Croix companies and one St. Thomas company mentioned in the press release but not yet identified.

According to the press release, during the weeks of March 23 and March 30, Planning inspected pest control companies throughout the territory to determine whether those companies are using methyl bromide. As part of that inspection, Planning conducted an inventory of the pesticide products in storage and requested that the companies provide Material Safety Data Sheets pertaining to all the pesticides used, stored or sold in the territory containing methyl bromide.

Currently, Planning and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are in custody of the quarantined methyl bromide canister on St. Thomas and are collaborating to secure the quarantined canisters on St. Croix, the press release indicates.

As part of the ongoing investigation, Planning is also working with other agencies, including the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, EPA and the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture to locate the distributor of methyl bromide to the territory. Planning said on March 25 the pesticide containing methyl bromide used in the Sirenusa incident came from Puerto Rico.

Additionally, Planning said on March 26 that Terminix used pesticide containing methyl bromide at another Sirenusa location in October 2014 and at three locations on St. Croix in 2014.

Planning said it inspected the Terminix offices on St. Thomas on March 23 and

interviewed Terminix employees. After confirming that Terminix possessed methyl bromide and learning of other locations where Terminix used the banned methyl bromide products, Planning issued a "Stop Use Order" to Terminix in St. Thomas and on St. Croix.

Both orders required that Terminix immediately stop using pesticides containing methyl bromide in the territory, provide Planning with all documentation relating to the purchase, use, and application of pesticide products containing methyl bromide over the last 12 months, quarantine the subject pesticides, and refrain from moving, destroying, altering or affecting the subject pesticides.

On March 23, Planning and EPA launched a joint investigation into the methyl bromide release at Sirenusa. This investigation included air quality sampling for the presence of various compounds of interest.

The press release indicates that EPA Region II Director Judith Enck visited Sirenusa and subsequently met with Gov. Kenneth Mapp to provide a status update and plan of action.

Planning said anyone with questions or concerns regarding any pesticide use can contact the department's Division of Environmental Protection's Pesticide Program at 1-340-774-3320, extension 5193, on St. Thomas and 1-340-773-1082, extension 2272, on St. Croix.